through community empowerment strategies and policy advocacy on the national stage.

Sachs (2015) writes that a good society 'is not only an economically prosperous society (with high per capital income) but also one that is socially inclusive, environmentally sustainable and well governed' (p 12). In this context, social workers promote the building of a good society especially for the vulnerable sections of society who often get neglected in the process. It is therefore our objective to understand the SDG agenda and find our place as professional social workers in building a better society for all people.

The SDGs were formulated through an extension participatory process—the collective journey from high level panels to open working groups with lots of consultations and finally a draft negotiated document agreed upon the State players.

The post Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) review process began at Rio plus 20 (June 2012) where the document The Future We Want was released (UN: Rio plus 20). After this, the UN established a high level panel in July 2012, to advise the world leaders on the global development framework beyond 2015. They produced a report entitled 'A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies through Sustainable Development' (UN: High Level Panel). This was followed by an Open working group for SDG which was established in July 2013 (UN: Open Working Group), and this global participatory process produced a report on Proposals for SDG by July 2014.

By December 2014, the UN Secretary General Report Synthesis Report 'The Road to Dignity by 2030: Ending Poverty, Transforming All Lives and Protecting the Planet' was released. By August 3, 2015, a draft SDG Agenda document entitled 'Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development' was circulated after a lengthy global discussion among all the stakeholders. There was a strong collective process, and civil society was part of this formulation process although the dominant players were the member states. All these documents were freely accessible on the UN website, and therefore, this formulation process was inclusive and transparent.

The 2030 SDG Agenda has five areas of critical importance which can be referred to as the five Ps. These are people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnerships. The first P is PEOPLE and is the heart of development to promote human dignity, well-being of all, combat inequalities, end poverty and gender equality. The second P is PLANET—and champions combating climate change, promoting sustainable use of earth's resources and sustainable patterns of consumption and production. The third P, PROSPERITY, specifically focuses on inclusive and sustainable economic growth. The fourth P is PEACE—promote life free from fear, coercion and violence,

access to justice and human rights for all, and the final P, PARTNERSHIP, calls for global solidarity and people—centred approach to development. All these are at the heart of social work theory and practice as can be seen by the IFSW/IASSW definition of social work (IFSW 2014).

The 2030 Global Transformation Agenda has 17 goals and 169 specific targets. It is noted that the SDGs will provide a more comprehensive framework in addressing the concerns of the Bottom 40 % (B40) of the socio-economic divide, ensuring not just equal access but also outcomes. The SDGs build on a strong commitment to people-centred development, human rights and environmental sustainability. The agenda focuses on human rights and environment and not just on development concerns. This is a global agenda for the next 15 years—2016 to 2030. Each nation state or country has the primary responsibility for financial resources mobilization and capacity building. There will be a global financing for development agenda. In addition, there will be a new partnership between the private sector and civil society in this sustainable development agenda.

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Social workers can relate to this Agenda 2030 at the national, regional and global levels. The SDGs bring an interconnected understanding of human needs and concerns that are economic, social and environmental. Reference is made in the 2030 Agenda to terms such as 'deep interconnection & many crosscutting elements across the goals and targets' (United Nations 2015). Furthermore, a more holistic and sustainable way of addressing human need is promoted through tackling poverty, education, health, economy and employment which are all human development concerns.

The International Federation of Social Workers, the International Association of Schools of Social Work and the International Council on Social Welfare jointly initiated a global agenda between 2012 and 2016 (IFSW 2014). In 2010 at Hong Kong, an extensive consultative process began at a joint conference and this culminated in specific commitments to action. A joint publication entitled 'The Global Agenda for social work and social development commitment to action' was developed.

In this exercise, the three global organisations agreed to support the UN in the preparation of the post 2015 development agenda. At the global campaign level, the three global organisations agreed to undertake five strategies, namely promote social and economic equalities, ensure the dignity and worth of the persons, promote sustainable communities and environmentally sensitive development, promote well-being through sustainable human relationships, and ensure an appropriate environment for practice and education. The organisations jointly stated 'we would strive with others for a people-focused global economy that is regulated to protect and

promote social justice, human rights and sustainable development' (IFSW 2014, p 3). They also pledged that their organisations will 'promote education and practice standards in social work and social development that enabled workers to facilitate sustainable social development outcomes' (IFSW 2014, p 3).

There was a strong global agenda in working alongside the UN formulation process. However, at the Malaysia level, social workers were not very active in this process and therefore left the national, regional and international organisations to play this role. In the post-2015 period, there is still a necessity for grassroots organisations and social workers to reflect on the global process and to know how their practice can be guided by this global vision and agenda of SDGs. IFSW rightly identified that 'social work and social development practitioners are not normally involved in global, macroeconomic decisions. However practitioners do bear witness to their social consequences and realities on a daily basis and have a duty to provide feedback about the outcomes of social policies' (IFSW 2014, p 5).

The human rights approach adopted in the SDGs especially in defining the issues as well as governing implementation has relevance for social work profession. Earlier, the UN Centre for Human Rights in cooperation with IFSW & IASSW published a Human Rights & Social Work professional training manual in 1994. The document notes that there is 'a need for a clear & unreserved commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights and to the satisfaction of fundamental aspirations' (p 3). It is clearly stated that 'the greater knowledge and understanding of human rights will improve the actions and interventions of social work professionals' (p 3). In the SDG document, there is specific reference to 'respect, protect and fulfil all human rights… & fundamental rights are enjoyed by all without discrimination' (United Nations 2015 p 4). In addition, there is a very strong emphasis on gender equality and empowerment.

The SDG and social work values concur: For instance, the Agenda 2030 uses terms such as human dignity, inclusivity, respect diversity, equality and non-discrimination, empowerment, reliance, resilience, and self-help and realization of full potential. Social workers identify with these values for practice.

There is also a close parallel between social work target

policy axis, to ensure that it safeguards the welfare and well-being of marginalized groups and at a minimum, does not increase entrenched inequalities' (p vii–viii).

In this context, the SDG agenda 2030 with the 17 goals and the 169 targets is better poised to address the next level of development concerns. In this context, these 17 goals must be taken as a whole and the underlining philosophy and ethos of the SDGs must be upheld. A selective reading and compliance to some of the goals and targets will be ineffective. Therefore, the three dimensions of sustainable development must be taken together- namely economic, social and environmental in the context of human rights and inclusive development. The five key areas are critically important—people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership. In addition for Malaysia, the guiding principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the Declaration on the Right to Development are formative to the realisation of a just society. Combating inequality and creating sustainable and inclusive societies are at the heart of the global transformation. The theme of 'no one will be left behind' (United Nations 2015 p 3) is our collective journey.

Amartya Sen (1999) clearly articulates a theory for practice which breaks the narrow view of development measured by growth of gross national product or with the rise of personal incomes. Professor Sen states 'development process in inclusive terms that integrate economic, social and political considerations' (p 8). Earlier in the book he notes that

'what people can positively achieve is influenced by economic opportunities, political liberties, social powers, and the enabling conditions of good health, basic education, and the encouragement and cultivation of initiatives. The institutional arrangements for these opportunities are also influenced by the exercise of people's freedoms, through the liberty to participate in social choice and in the making of public decisions that impel the progress of these opportunities' (p 5)

Therefore, in Malaysia, the SDG's must not just be viewed in a narrow or selective way, but in a holistic and inclusive way which empowers the people to realise their full potential

The Eleventh Malaysia Plan indicated that 'people are the centre piece of all development efforts' (p i). This is a significant policy declaration. All agencies and institutions must set this as their key public policy agenda and ensure that this becomes the overriding theme.

There is also an acknowledgment that there is a two pronged approach in economic development namely a commitment to 'People Economy' as well as 'Capital Economy'. This likewise is a significant public policy declaration. Often, we will see the conflicts of these two economies, and therefore, we need institutional frameworks like social impact assessment instruments as well as grievances resolving mechanisms. One such example is the SUHAKAM (2013) Human Rights Commission of Malaysia's 'Report of the National Inquiry into the land rights of Indigenous people' which documents the human rights abuses and violations on indigenous people land rights. In a similar way, there are issues and concerns of the urban poor are documented by both Lim Chia Ying (2014) and Tan (2015). Government must address these shortfalls through effective remedial and complaint mechanism so as to mitigate these negative aspects.

However, concepts like people economy and that the public sector agencies will be 'Citizen-centric public services' as described in the 11MP is a step forward to make public sector

document Malaysia has signed is the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP).

Social Workers in Malaysia have not played an active role in ensuring compliance from the State agencies in fulfilling their obligations. This role is well-played by human rights activists and human rights organisations including right-based women's groups. In a similar way, social workers and their associations were not really active in the Universal Periodical Review Process (UPR) which was led by human rights activist groups including those working on gender. However, it must be noted that from an SDG perspective, this human rights discussion is very important as human rights are a key component of the SDGs. Therefore, holding Malaysia to a global standard and compliance is of utmost importance.

Let us review the three conventions and compliance concerns in the Malaysian context.

Basic information on the CRC and Malaysia is from the UNICEF website (UNICEF 2015). Malaysia ratified the CRC in 1995 with a number of 'reservations' to the provisions of the CRC. In the UN system, a 'reservation' allows a State to disagree with a provision in a treaty. The State can still approve the treaty as a whole, with reservations serving as exceptions.

Reservations to CRC Articles 1, 2, 7, 13, 14, 15, 28(1)(a) and 37 were put in place since these Articles were said to 'not conform with the Constitution, national laws and national policies of the Government of Malaysia, including the Syariah law'. While the Government has lifted some of these reservations, others remain, namely Article 2 on non-discrimination, Article 7 on name and nationality, Article 14 on freedom of thought, conscience and religion, Article 28(1)(a) on free and compulsory education at primary level, and Article 37 on torture and deprivation of liberty. Governments that ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols must report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the body of experts charged with monitoring a country's implementation of these human rights treaties. These government reports must outline the situation of children in the country and explain the measures taken to realise and protect their rights.

Malaysia submitted her first report to the Committee in 2006; however, the second report which was due in 2012 is still pending. On the first report, the CRC Committee recognised the Government's serious attempts to comply with the CRC, especially through the enactment of the Child Act in 2001. The Committee submitted its Concluding Observations to Malaysia in 2007, which included the following recommendations: First, review and abolish Malaysia's reservations to the CRC. Second, ratify the two Optional Protocols and other international laws. Third, review Malaysia's dual legal system

(Civil and Syariah) as some domestic laws are obstacles to the realisation of the CRC in Malaysia. Fourth, review and reform domestic laws such as the Essential (Security Cases) Regulations 1975. Fifth, abolish capital punishment for children. Sixth, review the Children and Young Persons (Employment) Act 1966 to ensure that acceptable conditions of work are clearly and strictly defined to comply with international labour standards.

The information and analysis on CEDAW were secured from Women's Aid Organisation (WAO) which is documented below. Malaysia ratified CEDAW on July 5, 1995. The Government of Malaysia submitted its initial and second periodic reports on the status of women in the country at the 35th CEDAW session at the United Nations in New York on May 24, 2006. The Malaysian Government was represented by a delegation led by the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development and six representatives from women's NGO groups. Malaysian NGOs prepared a Shadow Report. Upon the delay of the third report, the CEDAW Committee requested that a combined third and fourth report be submitted by the Malaysian government in August 2008. This report is still outstanding and delayed by over 7 years.

The Malaysian Women NGOs provided a report in 2012 entitled 'CEDAW & Malaysia: Malaysian NGO Alternative Report assessing the Government's progress in implementing CEDAW' (WAO: 2012). According to this report, while there have been changes in government policy since 2006, there has not been a substantive change in the status of women's human rights in the country, at the national level in Malaysia, whereby convenient cultural and religious excuses are offered to explain the lack of acceptance of the principle of the universality of women's human rights. In July 2010, the government removed its reservations to CEDAW Articles 5(a), 7(b) and 16(2). However, reservations still remain on five CEDAW Articles: 9(2), 16(1)(a), 16(1)(c), 16(1)(f) and 16(1)(g).

The central issue is that the Malaysian government has not incorporated the CEDAW Convention into national law. There is no gender equality legislation in place providing for the comprehensive realisation of substantive equality of women with men in both public and private spheres of life. The overarching concerns expressed by the CEDAW Committee at the Malaysian government's 2006 review session continue to be issues of concern. These include the lack of clarity on the meaning of equality and non-discrimination, the lack of a legal framework for equality and non-discrimination, the lack of data disaggregated by gender and the neutrality of the Malaysian government's 5-year overarching Malaysian Development Plans. The Women's NGOs note that the government is to be commended on lifting its reservations to three

CEDAW Articles: 5(a), 7(b) and 16(2). However, little has been done to achieve the practical realisation of the intent of these Articles, as there has been no change in law or policy and the status quo remains. The NGOs highlight that the government has not removed nor given any intension to remove the following five reservations in CEDAW Articles: 9(2), 16(1)(a), 16(1)(c), 16(1)(f) and 16(1)(g). The government has not given any indication of an intention to remove its reservations to these Articles.

Although Article 8(2) of the Federal Constitution was amended to include gender as a prohibited ground for discrimination, this was not accompanied by a comprehensive review of all laws, including provisions within the Federal Constitution itself, which continue to be discriminatory. The government has not incorporated the CEDAW Convention into national law. There is no gender equality legislation in place providing for the comprehensive realisation of substantive equality of women with men in both public and private spheres of life.

Malaysia signed the CRPD on April 8, 2008 and ratified it on July 19, 2010. In the UN website UN (2006), it is recorded that 'Malaysia acknowledges that the principles of non-discrimination and equality of opportunity as provided in ar-

punishment (31 recommendations), special groups (70 recommendations), health care (15 recommendations), freedom of expression (13 recommendations), respect and tolerance (13 recommendations) education (9 recommendations), income inequality and poverty (8 recommendations), and general (10 recommendations).

The Society for the Promotion of Human Rights (PROHAM) hosted four Roundtable Discussions to review the submissions made for the UPR discussions as well as the outcome document and Malaysia'

were not trained in social work. Such a high ratio of untrained personnel has affected the image of the ministry, and also reflects poorly on the development and identity of the social work as a whole' (p 513). A fuller historical review of both social work practice and social work education is provided by Jonathan Parker forthcoming 2016 (Jonathan et al. 2016).

This situation has not really changed very much regards to social work professionals due to the understanding of social work as an act of compassion and caring. While this value is true, it should not negate the social work knowledge based and competencies needed. More local universities are now offering an undergraduate program in social work. The situation will change, but there is a need for a clear policy change on the part of the Federal government especially with regard to professional recognition which is currently lacking. The

a human rights approach and social workers can utilise this framework as it has been endorsed by global leaders and nationally at the Malaysian context by the Prime Minister who made a global promise.

Two field studies were undertaken recently pertaining to urban poor communities. The first is the study of nine urban flat neighbourhoods where we saw the need for inter-ethnic and cross-cultural approach of social work practice lacking due to the way current practice is very ethnic oriented. Lim Chia Ying (2014

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